



Opening Statement

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Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Peter King (R-NY) Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

“Addressing Remaining Gaps in Federal, State, and Local Information Sharing”

Remarks as Prepared

For our first hearing in the 114th Congress, the subcommittee is focusing on the importance of information sharing and counterterrorism cooperation between federal, state, and local law enforcement. This hearing should demonstrate that this committee considers local law enforcement and first responders as absolutely vital in the homeland security mission, and set the stage for much of the committee’s activity in the 114th Congress.

A cop or sheriff’s deputy on the patrol, an analyst reviewing a suspicious activity report, or a first responder interacting with the public carrying out their daily responsibilities are most likely going to be the first to identify a possible threat. In the event of a terrorist attack, they will be the first to respond.

There are over 780,000 law enforcement officers in the United States (including federal, state, and local law enforcement officers (LEOs). Ensuring that information is available and accessible to appropriate state and local law enforcement personnel is a critical force multiplier in our nation’s efforts to defend against homeland terror attacks.

Since September 11, 2001, there have been a number of terror attacks on the homeland conducted by violent Islamist extremists: the 2009 Little Rock Recruiting Station shooting, the Fort Hood shooting (2009), Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day 2009, the 2010 attempted car bombing in Times Square, and the April 2013 bombings at the Boston Marathon.

Additionally, there have been at least two small-scale attacks inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): Oklahoma beheading (2014) and the hatchet attack against four New York Police Department (NYPD) officers (2014).

The threat of homegrown, radicalized individuals is growing. There have been 94 homegrown violent jihadist plots in the United States since 9/11, with over 70% occurring in the last five years.

We are dealing with unprecedented numbers of people seeking to join ISIS and other terror groups. There are over 150 U.S. persons who have, or have tried, to join ISIS. Just yesterday, three men were arrested in New York and Florida for conspiracy to provide material support to ISIS, including joining the group as fighters. This group has also discussed carrying out attacks in the homeland, including targeting law enforcement and military personnel. We have seen disrupted travelers carry out attacks in Canada, Australia, and elsewhere. It is vital that state and local law enforcement have visibility into this threat and ongoing cases in their areas of responsibility.

The unfortunate reality is that there is plenty of counterterrorism work to go around and this threat requires close coordination between federal, state and local law enforcement.

While progress has been made to improve the flow of information, action analysis of past attacks shows that there are remaining challenges. A common trend in these different reviews is the need for federal departments and agencies to view state and local law enforcement as partners in national security and counterterrorism, the need for leadership within organizations to ensure accountability for information sharing, wider access to necessary databases, and the professionalization of analysis and information sharing.

It is probably true that these issues will never be perfectly addressed, but we must keep in mind that our war on terror is a decades-long effort to defeat a dedicated enemy. Anyone who doubts that should remember that today is also the anniversary of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993 that killed 6 and wounded 1,000 people. We must continue to make every possible improvement to our homeland security – including intelligence and information sharing.

I would like to welcome Mr. Sena, Chief Beary, and Dr. Alexander. The input from your respective associations is critical to the subcommittee's understanding of progress made to improve the amount and quality of information shared between federal, state and local law enforcement and of remaining challenges.

I look forward to the panel's update and would like to thank our distinguished panel of witnesses in advance.

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